

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RECORD EASTERN INTERIOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Meeting Location: Community Hall, Chalkyitsik, Alaska

Meeting Date: May 20, 2008

Purpose: Identify public issues and concerns with BLM managed lands in the Eastern Interior Planning Area.

Number of public in attendance: 7

BLM personnel in attendance: Jeanie Cole (Planning), Jim Herriges (Wildlife), Kristin Mull (Fisheries) and Holli McClain (Recreation).

Meeting format:

4-7 pm: Attendees were introduced to why we are doing a new RMP, what an RMP does, and given examples of decisions that might come out of an RMP through a power point presentation and maps displayed on the walls. BLM staff answered questions. Participants were asked to express their concerns and issues with BLM-managed public lands. After the formal presentation and comments, BLM staff answered questions and went over maps with individuals.

Handouts: An Interested Party letter explaining the types of decisions made in the RMP and giving an overview of the initial steps in planning was available. In addition, a set of frequently asked questions, copies of the existing RMPs for the Steese, White Mountains and Fortymile, and brochures on the Steese/White Mountains units were available. A scoping comment sheet that could either be filled out at the meeting or returned to BLM at a later date was also available.

Issues/Questions/Concerns:

Withdrawals and Mining:

- If BLM allows mining in the Black River subunit what is the impact of the people in the villages that depends on subsistence and way of living? This is a vital area. There was an old village up there where people here came from and wildfires took that old village out. There is a gravesite there. There are allotments in those areas. that area is a corridor for moose moving into the Yukon Flats
- It is BLM land but this is a refuge. Are we looking at trying to protect this area for future generation of use or are we just going to go ahead and develop it and forget about everything else?
- We know that if we need something to subsist off of, that is the area that we are going to get it and if we go developing it and ruining that area then we are going to end up contaminating our rivers. We had a couple of major fires up in that area that even turned Black River red. So you see even fires contaminated the river

for a while. So I cannot agree with developing that area because we depend on it for moose.

- I cannot agree with this mining that the State is proposing in that area.
- That area [Black River] is practically untouched by man. That is why I oppose any kind of development up there, especially if it is going to do harm to the land and the animals.
- We have to fight to keep you out of the headwaters of the Black River or it is going to run brown. Mining development does that. They need the water to get at the minerals and they need to discard it somewhere. So where does it get discarded? It gets discarded into the Black River because they say it is not contaminated. The point is that the river is not going to be clear anymore.
- BLM should do more studies before allowing mineral development to protect subsistence.
- What is the basis for opening the Black River area to oil and gas leasing or mineral entry? How will these decisions be made? What areas will be considered for opening to mineral development?

Black River/Salmon Fork:

- In the last four or five years there are hardly any moose in the Yukon Flats. But the Salmon River and Black River areas were identified by our late traditional Chief, David Salmon as a calving ground for moose for the last 10 years.
- The whole area along the Canadian Border is a corridor for moose into the Yukon Flats.
- In the last five years that area has been burning up and now we are seeing erosion problems from wild fires that have been burning the last few years.
- In the Salmon Fork and Black River there are a lot of fish spawning areas and fish migrate up into that area. There is all different kinds of waterfowl, there's all different kind of land animals, land otters, every kind of animal that you can think of live in that country.
- All the streams in the Black River subunit run into Black River. The Grayling River, Drifting Snow, Salmon River, every river in that area runs into this river [Black] and that is a vital area for wildlife, fish, and subsistence. That is the area that most people go into to hunt in the fall.
- There are bald eagles that nest all the way up Black River into the Salmon River. I watch them in the fall time when I am out hunting.
- The whole Yukon Flats depend on moose and that area is pretty much – the whole area along the corridor of the Canadian border is like a corridor for moose into the Yukon Flats.
- The Black River area supports all kinds of fish: grayling, Northern pike, sheefish, and three kinds of salmon that run into that area to spawn.
- It would not take very much affect on the moose in that area. Even if you had another village that goes into the area and that is only one time out of the year and a lot of people do not go in there in the winter and hunt. But we know there are moose in that area and if we really need it, we would go that far in the winter to get a moose.
- The Black River is the only area and the only river in this area that produces whitefish. Every fall we got 30-year-old humpbacks coming out of there, whitefish, is what we live on.
- What is the highest level of protection that BLM can put on the Black River area? What will you do to protect this land? What are you going to do to protect our

water from running brown? We would like to know the answers and we would like to see this area completely protected.

- The areas you are considering opening up for mining development, I would like to see that go away.
- Black River area is included in the plan but you do not have all of the data for it that you have on the other lands that are included that in your plan. Now why is that? The same study that you have done for the rest of it [Steese and White Mountains] should be done on this area also before you include it in the plan because it is not fair to the people that live here.
- Why is the Black River being included in this plan? How can it be on the same timeframe as other well studied and established areas like the White Mountains and the Steese?
- There are many sites of importance in the Black River: graveyard sites along the river, animal habitat, nesting grounds, historic sites, minerals, fishery use areas that we have been using for long as we have been here.
- The Black River has many sites of importance: gravesites, wildlife habitats, nesting grounds, historic and prehistoric sites, traditional use areas, scenic areas, fishing and hunting areas, subsistence use areas, old Salmon Village, spawning areas, and historic trails.

Wildlife:

- Big Lake is the biggest staging area for waterfowl in the area - the biggest in Eastern Alaska.
- Only once in my lifetime I've seen caribou come through here but they used to come through here but that's changed now because of the villages and all the houses that are built and the things that are going on now in the industry and in every other thing that comes into whatever plays a factor in changing their course in where they go. So they do not come through this way any more and I believe it is because of the activity down this way. So they are further up north now. This used to be one of their trails.

General:

- Doyon Corp. is supposed to be protecting our land and so is BLM. You are supposed to be looking after the well-being of the people and the Black River. The Black River runs clear. I can go down there and have a drink of that water. I swim in it all summer long. It breaks my heart to see this happen and it makes me feel like that our voice is not strong enough and that you guys are going to come in here and step on our land and walk right over us regardless of it and use Congress and the Statehood to hide behind and it removes the responsibility from either of you guys.
- Our people have been hunting and living on this land for – I do not even know a figure to throw out - but a long time and a lot longer than any of us have been around here and now we have to fight for our land.
- On your EIS that you are required to do, is this meeting here just a phase that you all are just required to do and then you'll go back and say, oh yeah, we were at Chalkyitsik, let's put it in the papers and it'll look real good that we did this because we're showing concern for the people but okay, what's the next phase.
- Are we just giving you information to use against us? I am not trying to change the scope of this meeting. I am trying to find a way to protect our land and keep

the white man out of it, from coming up there and digging for gold, zinc, copper or whatever.

- I cannot believe that BLM does not have enough money, especially for land management and stuff like that. The BLM has a lot more money than our tribes do on managing land. Money should not be a reason to include the Black River in this planning effort.
- Why is the BLM making decisions without the input of Chalkyitsik? All of you are white and making all the decisions from the city. What do you know about Black River?
- We do not need a plan for the Black River area. We have done without the BLM and without a plan a lot longer than you guys have been here.
- When you talk about the Black River you need to involve all the tribes.
- How could the Chalkyitsik Tribal Council acquire this land from BLM?
- We are requesting that BLM let us know what is going on and that we have a seat at the table when you are making this decision. Keep us informed of anything that goes on out here and has to do with us. BLM is making decisions on our livelihood and not even understanding our livelihood.
- How can we be a cooperating agency and what is the commitment?
- The maps BLM has do not show all the Native allotments that are out there. People are confused when they look at the maps and they do not see allotments that exist. How can people get the maps corrected?
- BLM needs to cover the following topics in the plan: State of Alaska's plan for Black River-subsistence resources, environmental impacts, research in progress, road development plans, other development, seismic study, Tribe's sovereignty, and development of an oversight group.

Water Quality:

- The Black River is the main water source for the village of Chalkyitsik. Although it looks black, the water comes out crystal clear and it is the water that everyone here in the community uses for drinking water and for everything else. One Recommendation is to keep that in consideration and offer it the highest possible protection because it is the only real water source here.

Special Designations:

- The BLM had recommended in the 1980's that the Black River be considered an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) and I hope that you will take that same consideration and make that same recommendation in this plan.

Trails:

- I was wondering about historic trails, especially the old side of Chalkyitsik and the ones we use like for hunting and trapping, what happens to those? Because if we use them traditionally I do not think we should give it to the public since it is ours.

Subsistence:

- How will BLM address subsistence in the plan?
- Will there be new studies on subsistence?
- What precautions will be taken to protect subsistence use and resources?
- The Black River area is a vital area for subsistence.

- The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) has done a traditional land usage planning. I would like to ask BLM to go to the CATG and get this traditional land usage plan from them and to look at it. Because they have it documented land use from our elders and the elders before them of who was on this land and did what on our land. Who lived there and who hunted what.